Playing Second Fiddle

kidbrothers.net/release/mayjun94.html

> *It is always important that a fiddle should remember (and, who guess that it could forget?) that it is a fiddle - that it is wood and wire and polish and glue and not much more than that - except, of course, in the caress of a fiddler. There, in that hand, on that shoulder, under that chin - all of its lightness delicately balanced and its strings skillfully bowed - it becomes a voice. There, out of the hollow body and thin skin of this little peculiarly shaped box, the fiddler forges his music. There, in a sense, the word becomes flesh, the fiddler's idea becomes concrete, shimmering concrete - reality. And this, of course, is what a fiddle dreams of at night in the dark of its closet, in the stifling closeness of its case.*
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> *No fiddle - at least none that I have ever met - dreams of being delivered out of the aforementioned darkness to be displayed in a glass showcase. Fiddles don't have eyes - or the kind of intelligence needed to imagine a concept as foreign to them as "vision." This is why you never see a fiddle fussing over itself; primping and preening and staring at mirrors. This is why it is luckier to be a fiddle than to be a prince, and where the wisdom of that phrase "ignorance is bliss" is most fully shown. Fiddles do not care to be seen, so they do not mind being small, which is handy for the fiddler.*
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> *Besides having no eyes, fiddles also (and this may come as a shock to you) have no ears. For a fiddle, music is not a matter of "sound." They not only cannot imagine "sight" or "being seen" - they cannot imagine "sound" or "being heard" - I suspect that even if you could convince one of the experience of hearing, you'd be hard pressed to convince one of the value of hearing. You must understand, fiddles are more grave and serious than even columnists. That does not mean that they have no sense of humor - it only means that their jokes don't rest in their cleverness - it comes from their lightness. And all that lightness that makes a fiddle ring would rattle to pieces any notion of the value of being an audience to one who has had the experience of being an instrument.*
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> *Now, although a fiddle may never be fooled by the folly of human thinking, very much like us, they have pain. Their necks are stiff and their nerves, their strings, are stretched. They feel the friction of the bow and inside their*

beautiful brown little bodies they have only a little stick called a soundpost and an emptiness that seizes every inch of space - top to bottom, side to side. Their emptiness is for them (as it is for us) a nearly unbearable ache - an ache that is fitted to the shape that makes its tone. And sometimes a fiddle is tempted to fill that void with rags or glass or gold, even knowing that, if it should do that, it would never again resonate the intentions of its fiddler. It would never again be alive with his music. It would dull itself to the exquisite heat of the fiddler's will, the deliberate tenderness of his fingers.

And so, they resist. They resist so that they can respond.

Some fiddles have lived without eyes or ears or innards for a couple hundred years. They would die, though, if they were denied a fiddler.

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